



## St John Lutheran Church

1017 Montana  
Libby, MT 59923  
(406)293-4024

Genesis 15: 1-6

Wishing Does not Make it So ... The Word of God Does!

**What great promises** there are in wishing... **and what** great disappointments follow as wish after wish goes unfulfilled. **Wishing is rather** like buying a lottery ticket... **an investment** of one's hope in the possibility of a payoff beyond what our own meager resources can provide. **But for someone** to make a wish for himself is hardly the same as having a blessing.

**For someone to** wish that another person might have this or that is... **not the** same as making it happen. **It is easy** to say, "**I wish that grandma's Alzheimer disease would go away and she would be the way she was and remember me and do all the things with me that she once did.**" **But wishing for it doesn't** make it happen. **People become sad...disappointed** and disillusioned at such thoughts... **especially as** the years pass. **Grandma gets worse. The granddaughter grows** older.

**Wishing for nice** things for ourselves... **or even** wishing for good things for others... **is hardly** the same as having a blessing **because of the uncertainly of having what you wished for.** **Wishes originate within** our hearts and "wish-ing" focuses on what **we think** is the best... **the way** life ought to be... **and the** way one wants it to be. **As such,** wishes can be awfully depressing and produce disappointments that evolve into growing doubts about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. **Worse yet... such wishes... if somehow** fulfilled... **give us** a false sense of security and a mistaken idea of faith. **Sadly, too often** our own prayers are often little more than such wishes of what we think is best in our lives.

**In the Old** Testament Reading for today... **Abram was** not especially filled with joy at the events of his life... **particularly one** empty spot ... **that** of a son. **Abram, whom we** know more by the name Abraham... **had been** promised by the Lord God that He would bring forth a great nation from Abram and that in Abram all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12) through Abram's Offspring (Gal. 3:16) **The Christ of God... This Seed of** the woman (Gen. 3:15) would be from the seed of Abram. **Yet Abram was** without a son. **Still, he tries to remain** faithful to the promise of God. **But waiting is** difficult. **Abram continues to** go about his life. **He rescues his** nephew Lot and meets the King of Peace. **This King of** Righteousness brings out bread and wine to Abram. **Abram even tries to help God along with His Promise by having a child with his wife's servant Hagar.** **Then we come to** the Old Testament Reading for today. **Where God takes** Abram from the uncertainty of his own wishes to the sure and certain promise of His Word.

**The Word of the Lord came to Abram.** The Word of the Lord came to Abram! God came to Abram! What comfort this ought to be for you. The Word of the Lord came to Abram because the Lord God knew exactly what fears and questions go on in the minds... hearts ...and souls of His people. You are sinning if you think, "I wish God knew what I was going through. I wish He were here. I wish He knew what dying was all about." The Word of God tells us that the Lord knows your fears, your hurts and your pains ... not just from a point of view of having a detached knowledge of them... but from actually experiencing them. As we hear in Hebrews 4:14-15, "... let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Great drops of sweat and blood poured forth from Him as He felt the awful abandonment of man and God before He was crucified. He experienced the pain and anguish of body and soul when He suffered and died on the cross in your place.

After these things the Word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abram." Although the Lord doesn't initially refer to Abram's specific dilemma... He knew exactly what plagued Abram's days and haunted his nights... and God told him, "Fear not. Do not be afraid. My Word is sure and certain. Nothing will stand in My way of My Word. Fear not, Abram, I am your Shield, your exceedingly great Reward." God will sustain Abram and be the greatest Reward that this faithful man could ever be given.

But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!" The Lord permits Abram to voice his concerned thoughts and to speak about the promise of God's Word and the status of Abram's life. "Lord, how is this going to work out since I am without a son and therefore without the promised Seed of the woman. Will the Savior be descended from Sarai and me? We have no son, You know. Or will He be a descendant from my house but not from me? Will it be Eliezer of Damascus. Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

And behold, the Word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Here the Lord God Almighty reminds one of His own that His Word shall accomplish His purpose. The promise is sure and certain even though it seems impossible to man that it could ever take place. This IS the way God works. Think about such impossibilities from our limited human perspective... the creation of the universe in six days... all the animals in Noah's Ark during the worldwide flood... the Incarnation of the Lord in a young virgin... the Atonement for all sins of all people of all times when Jesus died on the cross... the Resurrection of the Christ... the Resurrection of the dead in Baptism... that the Holy Spirit works through the Word to grant you the gift of faith in Christ... the forgiveness of your sins in the absolution... the Real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar... that the Lord knows every hurt, fear and pain of your body, soul and spirit... that He is with you always to the end of the age... that He will never leave you nor forsake you... that the Lord is preparing a place for you in Paradise and will take you to be with Him.

**Apart from faith... man views** these historic events as absurd ...**denying God** and His attributes... **or claiming** that such acts are in fact impossible ...**imagining such** things are more than anyone could possibly hoped for... **or even** dared to wish for. **Whether you deny God's actions of fail to believe them...the result is the same. For both limit God. Both place the wish of man and the reason of man over the Word of God.**

**Then there are others like you...believers like you... others who believe the** promises of God given by the Word of the Lord ... **and they** do so despite the fact that they may not be seeing any miraculous action of God at the moment... **despite the** seeming impossibility... **despite what** human reason deduces, senses suggest and emotions evoke. **The Christian is** moved by God to believe!

**Then the Lord** brought Abram outside and said, "**Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.**" This is not the first time that Abram had received this promise. **Earlier God had** declared, "**I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth**" (Genesis 13:16). **Beholding the dust** of the earth is an activity done during the daytime. **What about at** night ... **when doubts** arise and the thoughts of man are darker? "**Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.**" **Don't wish upon** a star. **Rather, count your** blessings... **if you** are able. **Don't engage in** the fruitless pursuit of searching for Aladdin's Lamp with its diabolical three wishes. **Don't wish for anything. Behold God's certain Promise. Behold instead, the cup of blessing which we bless. Is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ?** (1 Cor. 10:16). "**Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.**" **The Psalmist confesses, "I remember Your Name in the night, O Lord"** (Psalm 119:55) **and at midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments"** (62).

**Dear people of God... let the sure Promises of God... which He** has so lovingly provided us in His Holy Word... **be the substance and the hope of our prayers. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.**" Isa 55:8-9 (NKJ)

**Abram believed in** the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. **Abraham saw Jesus'** day and rejoiced and was glad (John 8:56). **The Lord ... credited it to him (Abram) for righteousness. That, dear people,** is the Promise of God for the salvation of all those who believe ... **salvation by** the Grace of God through faith in Christ as the Redeemer from of old. **Isaac believed God** and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. **Moses trusted the** Lord God and it was credited to him as righteousness. **Shiphrah, Puah, Ruth and Esther** believed in God and it was credited to them as righteousness. **And what about** Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah... **also David** and Samuel and the prophets??? (Hebrews 11:32). **Paul believed God** and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. **So did Timothy,** Ignatius and Polycarp. **The Truth of this Good News** came to a wretched man named Martin Luther. **By the grace** of God, he believed the Lord God and it was reckoned to Luther as righteousness.

**Can you not** behold that Jesus Christ... **the Son** of God and the Son of Abraham ... **has become** a blessing to the nations... **and that** God's Promise for the Savior was fulfilled in Christ... **and that** God's Promise that Abraham would be the Father of many is being fulfilled each time He works faith in the heart of an unbeliever?

**The Apostle Paul** wrote that the adoption as sons of God is by the same Grace and faith that God bestowed on Abraham... **so that we are also sons of Abraham, who is the father of us all** (Romans 4:16).

**We are sons** of Abraham... **not because** of who Abraham was... **but because** we were moved by God to believe what Abram believed. **We are Lutherans...** **not because** of who Luther was... **but because** we believe, teach and confess the same dogma and doctrine that he did and does. **That is that** we are saved by Grace through faith in Jesus Christ. **That the Son** of God became flesh and blood so that He might die for my sins and then conquer sin, death and the devil once and for all by His Glorious Resurrection!

**This is the Gospel ... the Good News** of God in Christ. **So I will** not say, "**I wish you would believe this**" for this would be a man's expression of desire.

**Imagine a pastor** making a hospital visit with a man with terminal cancer and saying, "**I wish you healing of your body today.**" **It's the equivalent** of saying "**Have a nice day.**" **I wish you** no such thing. **Rather, hear the Good News** and the certain promise of our Lord, "**I forgive you all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**" **These Words are** not the wish of man... **but they** are the Very Word of God and they have the Power to convey exactly what is declared unto you, ... **for you who believe.**

**So our prayer... the prayer** to which God invites us... **the prayer** which our Lord has taught us... **is no** mere wish or question. **It is a** confession of faith that God will most certainly provide according to His good and gracious Will ... **here on** earth even as He does in heaven ... **for the sake of His Son, who died for you.** **And you who** believe in this Lord ... **the Christ... the Son** of the living God ... **He accounts** it to you for righteousness unto life eternal. In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

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Rev. Eric M. Christiansen  
St. John Lutheran Church  
Libby, Montana